National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements

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A Resource for Students: Frequently Asked Questions about Filing a SARA Student Complaint

SARA offers many benefits for students of SARA-participating institutions, including expanding access to educational opportunities and resolution of complaints. Below are frequently asked questions from students about the SARA student complaint process.

- **Where can I find my institution's complaint policy and process?**
  - **Answer**: First, try searching in your institution's website search bar for "Complaint Policy." The policy should be readily available on the institution's website, and also located within the Student Handbook or the Catalog. If you still are not able to locate the complaint policy and process, contact a representative of the institution and ask them to share it with you directly.

- **What *is* a SARA State Portal Entity?**
  - **Answer**: A SARA State Portal Entity, or "SPE," is the designated entity that performs the SARA work of the state, with all the necessary legal authority to do that work on behalf of the state. For SARA-related complaints, this is the primary state-level contact.

- **How do I locate the right SARA State Portal Entity for my institution?**
  - **Answer**: NC-SARA has a directory. Find your institution in our directory, and when it opens up, the SPE contact will be on the right side of the page.
- **Which SARA State Portal Entity do I contact? (The state my institution is located in, or the state where I live?)**

  Answer: Contact the SARA State Portal Entity for the state in which your institution is located. That State Portal Entity will notify the state in which you live, but the institution's State Portal Entity has final authority on SARA complaints.

  As note, if a student files a complaint with the SPE in their home state, then that SPE shall notify the SPE of the institution's home state and provide to the student the contact information of the SARA State Portal Entity of the institution's home state.

- **How do I find out where to file a complaint or an appeal with the SARA State Portal Entity?**
  - **Answer**: Please go to the SARA Student Complaints webpage and select "SARA Student Complaint Process Information by State," and you can select the relevant state.
- **What does a complaint or an appeal to a SARA State Portal Entity typically involve?**
  - **Answer**: Each state outlines its specific policy and processes on its website. States may have forms for you to download directly from the state website.

- **What kinds of issues can I ask the SARA State Portal Entity to resolve?**
  - Answer: You should begin a complaint resolution process with your institution directly. For the purposes of SARA, a SARA State Portal Entity will address concerns related to distance education activities (online learning, sufficiency of support for distance education students, and related activities) from out-of-state students attending a SARA-participating institution.

- **How long does a typical state student complaint appeal process take?**
  - **Answer**: Time may vary depending on the type of complaint and the agencies involved.

- **What kinds of documentation do I need to provide to the SARA State Portal Entity in my appeal?**
  - **Answer**: Typically, a state will have a form you will need to complete and submit. The form will likely ask you about the nature of your complaint, attempts you've made to resolve the complaint with the institution or other entities (such as its accreditor), and any documentation related to the complaint.

- **Who will be notified that I filed a complaint or an appeal?**
  - **Answer**: The home state portal entity of the institution and the state portal entity where you are located.

- **What role does NC-SARA play in the complaint process? What will NC-SARA do?**
  - NC-SARA takes students' complaints seriously. NC-SARA publishes a list of complaints filed against its SARA-participating institutions on its website in an effort to encourage enhanced transparency and accountability. Click here to learn more about student complaints.